

# THE BRIDGER



The Vermont Covered Bridge Society Newsletter – Issue #80

## Events

### Vermont Covered Bridge Society Spring Meeting

May 16, 2020, 10:00 a.m.  
Middlebury Congregational Church Addition  
30 North Pleasant Street (Rt. 7)  
Middlebury, Vermont

#### Meeting Agenda

9:00 a.m.

- Set-up time

10:00 a.m.

- Business meeting called to order

11:00 a.m.

- Robert Durfee of Dubois-King Engineering will speak about the Warren (Lincoln Gap) Covered Bridge Rehabilitation Project.

12:00 p.m.

- Break – dining arrangements and bridge tours will be discussed

#### **The meeting is open to all comers. There are no fees.**

- Snacks will be provided during the meeting.
- Lunch on your own at restaurants nearby.
- After adjournment, attendees are free to visit the three local covered bridges.
- Call Middlebury Chamber of Commerce at 802-388-7951 for overnight accommodations.

#### **Meeting Directions:**

The meeting will be held in the meeting room adjacent to the Middlebury Congregational Church at 30 North

Pleasant Street (Route 7), Middlebury. The church itself stands on the corner of Route 7 and Main Street.

*NOTE: We will not be meeting in the church; our meeting will be held in the contemporary addition, which faces North Pleasant Street (Route 7).*

#### **Parking**

- The Seymour Street parking lot is open with designated handicap spaces and ramps. There is on-street parking on Seymour Street.
- To enter the building on the east side, please use the door on the north end of the addition.

#### **Parking and access for individuals with disabilities:**

- **To access the meeting room:** There are designated parking spaces on State Route 7, alongside the church building itself and the new addition to the north of the church. Access into the building is via a ramp *from Route 7*. There is also designated parking in the parking lot on Seymour Street.
- **To the VCBS meeting room site:** From the designated street (*east side*) parking at 30 North Pleasant Street (Route 7), enter using the ramp on the *north* side of the building.
- There is an **elevator** to access both the lower and upper levels of the building from the Seymour Street parking lot.

NOTE: The Annual Fall meeting in October 2020 will celebrate the Society's 20<sup>th</sup> year at the Visions of Vermont Art Gallery in Jeffersonville, hosted by Terry and Jane Shaw. Details will follow.

President: Joe Nelson, P.O. Box 267, Jericho, VT 05465 email: [jcarlnelson@yahoo.com](mailto:jcarlnelson@yahoo.com)

Vice President: Steve Miyamoto, 8 Ridge Rd., Essex Junction, VT 05452, email: [spmiamamoto@comcast.net](mailto:spmiamamoto@comcast.net)

Secretary: Sarah Pierce, 7 Polygraphic Lane, Apt 7n, North Bennington, VT 05257, email: [srahpierce@yahoo.com](mailto:srahpierce@yahoo.com)

Treasurer: Dan Monger, email: [teelmonger@gmavt.net](mailto:teelmonger@gmavt.net)

# Membership Update

- Reported by Dan Monger, Chair

For those VCBS members who are receiving this newsletter with the mailing label marked in red, this indicates that you are behind in your membership dues. Membership fees are due in January. Annual members who are more than one year behind in their dues need pay only for the current year to return to good standing. Members who do not respond will unfortunately be purged from the membership list.

We now have 132 memberships, including:

- 1 Student
- 32 Individual Yearly
- 22 Family Yearly
- 48 Single Lifetime
- 24 Couple Lifetime
- 5 Business, Organization, or Municipality

The VCBS wishes a very happy birthday and happy anniversary to:

## February

05 Carol Robb (omitted last issue)

## March

02 John Billie  
 02 Gordon O'Reilly  
 04 Sarah Ann Gallagher  
 08 Neil Daniels  
 08 Merrilyn Towne  
 12 Priscilla Farnham  
 16 Bruce Laumeister  
 16 Bob Orr

21 Thomas & Lisette Keating  
 23 Greg Komeschok  
 23 Steve Miyamoto

## April

02 Nancy Hoch  
 11 Jane Porter Gresham  
 13 Gary Krick  
 22 Anthony Daniels  
 22 Dell & Nancy Hoch  
 25 John Dunn

## May

03 William Carroll  
 03 Thomas Keating  
 06 Debbie Whiston  
 09 Erwin Eckson  
 10 Charles Lovastik  
 12 James Crouse  
 15 Andy Behrens  
 17 Ron Bechard  
 22 Irene Barna  
 22 Lisette Keating  
 25 Cathleen Teel  
 27 Dolores Gendron  
 28 Bill McKone

*Please note: If I have neglected to include anyone, please send me an email.*

# Publicity Update

- Reported by Steve Miyamoto, Chair

Social media continues to grow. As I write this, we have just passed 900 members in the Vermont's Covered Bridges Facebook group.

We have received membership requests through the application form on the [vermontbridges.org](http://vermontbridges.org) website.

Speaking of the website, I am making progress on the last frontier: converting the archived material from the original format to the new format. The information has been organized by year and state. Check it out and let me know your thoughts on the format: [vermontcoveredbridgesociety@gmail.com](mailto:vermontcoveredbridgesociety@gmail.com).

## Annual Board of Directors Meeting

The 2020 annual Board of Directors meeting began on February 1, convening in accordance with VCBS Constitution and Bylaws, Article 3, Part 2. The meeting was conducted by email, fax, telephone, and surface mail, as appropriate. Eight of the 12 directors, constituting a quorum, voted on the seven proposals on the agenda.

1. Do you approve the proposed budget for the year 2020? (7 voted Yes, 1 voted No)
2. Shall the funds received in 2019 in donations and sales be put into the Save-a-Bridge Fund? (8 voted Yes)
3. Shall we appoint Irene Barna to the Board of Directors as Addison County Bridge Watch Chair? (8 voted Yes)
4. Shall we appoint Pete Cosgrove to the Board of Directors as Rutland County Bridge Watch Chair? (8 voted Yes)
5. Should we sell the contents of the society library to the membership and the public, with the receipts to go to the Save-a-Bridge Fund? (8 voted Yes)
6. Shall we move the website operation from the Communication Committee to the Publicity Committee? (8 voted Yes)
7. Shall we organize covered bridge tours? (5 voted Yes, 3 voted No)

Dan Monger, Chair of the Membership Committee, challenged the proposed budget, asking for an increase in the Membership Committee budget, which led to the addition of Question 8. Dan increased his postage allowance from \$55 to \$165, slashed his telephone allowance from \$5 to \$0, decreased his printing allowance from \$200 to \$50, and increased his Membership Campaign funding from \$200 to \$500. All of this increased the Membership Committee allowance by \$255.

8. Do you approve the adjusted budget for the year 2020? (7 voted Yes, 1 voter absent)

The budget for 2020 is \$3,465, an increase of \$255 over the 2019 budget. The details of the new budget are available to the membership upon request.

Director Bill Caswell commented on Question 7. "It seems like this question should have been followed by

'Are you willing to organize and lead a tour?' It's easy to say that we should have them, but who is going to lead the charge? I will vote No, not because I don't think we should have them, but I am not able to devote the time necessary to make it happen."

With a quorum of eight of the 12 directors having voted and the closing date met, the 2020 Annual Director's Meeting is adjourned. –Joseph C. Nelson, Board of Director's Chair

## Vermont Covered Bridge Society Twentieth Annual Fall Meeting

Middlebury, Vermont  
Saturday, October 5, 2019

The twentieth annual fall meeting of the Vermont Covered Bridge Society was held in Middlebury, Vermont, on Saturday, October 5, 2019. The meeting was held in the new addition to the Middlebury Congregational Church. Fourteen people were in attendance when President Bill Carroll called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m.

### Minutes

The minutes of the annual spring meeting, held in Middlebury on April 6, 2019, were not read because they appeared in *The Bridger*.

### Treasurer's Report

- Reported by Dan Monger, Treasurer

### INCOME STATEMENT January 1, 2019 – October 5, 2019

#### INCOME

Donations	\$1,305.00
Dues	150.00
Events	0.00
Sales	4.24
Total Income	\$1,459.24

#### EXPENSES

Communications ( <i>The Bridger</i> )	
Postage	\$184.30
Printing	199.50

#### EVENTS

Purchases	\$2.65
Legislation	0.00
Membership	0.00

#### OFFICE

Postage	\$13.47
Publicity	0.00
Uncategorized	

Vermont Magazine Ad	178.00
Total Expenses	\$577.92
Gain	\$881.32

## BALANCE SHEET

Union Bank Checking Statement	
1/1/2019	\$14,712.89
Union Bank Checking Statement	
10/5/2019	\$15,594.21

Notes: Cash account, no fees charged  
Save-a-Bridge Fund (Muriel Siebert & Co. Fund) was rolled into the VCBS checking account.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Membership Committee** – Dan Monger, Chair

No report

**Historical Committee** – Bill Carroll, Chair

In late spring 2019, we received from the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation a large number of photographs and photographic postcards of covered bridges in Vermont, with the following cover letter:

“These photographs and postcards were compiled by Cleo Spicer May, who lived in Bellows Falls, Vermont. She and her husband, Percy May, traveled extensively around the state from the 1940s through the 1960s, documenting the landscape, with an emphasis on covered bridges and metal truss bridges. Cleo was a housewife and an amateur photographer, who developed and printed the photographs. The postcards were purchased at shops and motels that the Mays visited during their travels.

Following her death, these materials were passed down to Debra Austin, Cleo’s granddaughter. Debra, in turn, donated the materials to the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation in 2016. The materials were then sorted and distributed as follows:

Photographs and postcards showing covered bridges in Vermont were sent to the Vermont Covered Bridge Society.

Photographs and postcards showing covered bridges elsewhere in the nation (not Vermont) were sent to the National Society for the Preservation of Covered Bridges.

Photographs, postcards, and ephemera related to historic buildings, metal truss bridges, and landscapes of Vermont and New England were sent to the Special

Collections Department of the Bailey/Howe Library at the University of Vermont.”

The materials that VCBS received include seven binders (or albums) of photographic prints and postcards. A preliminary count of these prints indicates that there are a little over 1,000 prints. Many of the prints are arranged by trip, along with road map sections and lists of mileage driving time, along with expenses and personal notes. Other prints appear to be loosely bunched by geographic area. Many of the postcards, as well as some of the prints, are misidentified or unidentified.

To date, with very few exceptions, all of the bridges have been identified. Each album is being scanned or photocopied to retain the original order in which Cleo arranged the prints. Each print will be removed from the album and individually scanned, with copies printed for our bridge files and other purposes. (Old photo albums and binders are notoriously acidic and will damage or destroy photographic prints over time.)

We plan to develop a number of slide shows from the collection, based on individual trips or geographical area. The first of these will be a trip from southeastern Vermont to the Pittsford area in 1956, which should be completed in early 2020.

**Communication Committee** – Joe Nelson, Chair

We have been receiving compliments on the quality and content of our newsletter, *The Bridger*, thanks to the efforts of Editor Melanie Schropp and the members who have been submitting articles. A quality newsletter can help keep members and attract new ones.

## Events Committee

We need someone to chair the Events Committee and take charge of our annual meetings. Responsibilities include welcoming visitors, maintaining the sales table, and arranging for snacks/coffee. If you are interested, please contact Joe Nelson at [jcarlnelson@yahoo.com](mailto:jcarlnelson@yahoo.com).

Covered Bridge summit next June – details to come

**Bridge Watch** – Reported by Peter Cosgrove

- According to the recent (Oct. 2018) Agency of Transportation Report, the Depot Bridge in Pittsford would need major repair in order to stay. I met with the Town Manager in June 2019 and found that he was unaware of the report. I stopped by monthly thereafter, and progress has been made to the point that the town was provided a grant to hire an

engineering firm to prepare a bid package. The engineering firm advised that the bridge is not in as dire straits as reported.

- Covered bridge maintenance funds have historically been a separate budget item for AOT. Now, however, covered bridge maintenance is included in the general maintenance fund for all bridges. This may need watching.
- I would like to get more VCBS members involved in reviewing AOT's bridge reports.
- Irene Barna reported that construction is scheduled for the summer of 2020 in downtown Middlebury. This work may take ten weeks to complete and will affect nearby Pulp Mill Covered Bridge, which crosses Otter Creek. In May, Irene addressed the Middlebury Selectboard regarding the anticipated increase in traffic on the bridge. She suggested the installation of steel structures (headache bars) to prohibit oversized vehicles from entering the covered bridge. The Selectboard explained that sewer lines and other buried service lines around the bridge would make it difficult to erect the mounted steel structures. The Town Infrastructure Committee is planning to use only electronic signs to

warn of clearance limits. Two signs would be placed along the streets leading to the bridge – one sign in Middlebury and one sign in Weybridge. VCBS members are encouraged to write to the town of Middlebury, to newspapers, and local television stations about this issue.

- Five Vermont covered bridges have been damaged by oversized vehicles in 2019 alone.

### **Publicity Committee** – Steve Miyamoto, Chair

No report

### **Presentation**

VCBS member Jan Lewandoski, owner of Restoration and Traditional Building, presented *John Johnson and the Bridge at St. Johns, Quebec*, a paper he published in the *Timber Framers Guild*, describing the building of Pont Jones over the St. Laurence River by John Johnson of Burlington, Vermont.

### **Next Meeting Date**

No meeting date was set.

– Sarah Pierce, Secretary

## **Update on the Covered Bridge Museum**

Bruce Laumeister has provided us with the following update on the status of the Covered Bridge Museum and the Bennington Center for the Arts. The battle has now become a legal case and is in the hands of the courts.

Bruce is attempting to have his gift of the museum and the Center for the Arts to the now-closed Southern Vermont College annulled. According to Laumeister, the grounds for seeking the annulment is based on “their president fraudulently representing the college’s status of both overwhelming debt and enrolment of 50% of actual.” Southern Vermont College had been seeking buyers for the complex to offset their large debt. The gift was given in 2017.

The current status is that “so far, the court has ruled that the Center cannot be sold without our approval and that any buyer must be a non-profit art center that meets all the conditions of the original donation (501c3

non-profit), and the facility will remain a southwestern Vermont art center, serving the public. We intend to get our donation annulled, and we have a candidate artist’s organization ready to take it over and maintain it as we intended.”

Laumeister says that “unfortunately, this may take some time, as the courts are very slow and there are many lawyers involved. WE WILL GET IT BACK AND REOPEN IT TO THE PUBLIC!”

Visit the VCBS website for the article that was published last year concerning the closing of the museum. This article also includes a link to the story in the Bennington Banner with the full details. [http://www.vermontbridges.org/news\\_items\\_2019/vermont/bennington\\_covered\\_bridge\\_museum\\_closed.shtml](http://www.vermontbridges.org/news_items_2019/vermont/bennington_covered_bridge_museum_closed.shtml)

## Covered Bridges and Pollinator Gardens



You might wonder what covered bridges have in common with pollinator gardens. If so, Julia Parker-Dickerson has the answer.

Last fall we received an email from Julia, describing her Butterfly Garden Project at the Quinlan Covered Bridge. Included in the email were pictures and a request to post a link to her work at the bridge.

(<http://igardensvt.blogspot.com/p/the-butterfly-garden-at-quinlan-bridge.html>)

Well, this new project has not been dormant over the winter! It has found support with the UVM Extension Master Gardener program. Julia is now a project coordinator, working with Cindy Heath, who is a volunteer coordinator

for the UVM Extension program. Cindy has been able to provide contacts of others who would be interested in a project like this. More details to come this spring.

[http://vermontbridges.org/vermont-quinlan-bridge-pollinator\\_garden\\_10-06-19.shtml](http://vermontbridges.org/vermont-quinlan-bridge-pollinator_garden_10-06-19.shtml)



Happy 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary to the Vermont Covered Bridge Society! On February 2, 2000, the VCBS was officially incorporated. A handful of people worked hard to bring this society into existence. Attached is the announcement in the first edition of *The Bridger*. We will be celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary throughout the year as we remember some of the people and events of the first 20 years.



**ANNOUNCING THE VERMONT COVERED BRIDGE SOCIETY!!**

[http://www.vermontbridges.org/newsletters/2000/special\\_edition/Bridger\\_Special\\_Edition\\_April\\_2000.pdf](http://www.vermontbridges.org/newsletters/2000/special_edition/Bridger_Special_Edition_April_2000.pdf)

This was posted on the Vermont Covered Bridge Society's Facebook page. We will be looking back over the course of the year at some of the people and events that shaped the VCBS. The actual observance of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary will take place at the fall meeting. Plans will be announced as the date approaches.

## The Covered Bridge Builders

- By Joe Nelson

I remember the day when, newly arrived in Vermont, I discovered covered bridges. It was love at first sight of these ancient spans. Stepping into them was like stepping back in time. I began to explore them and learn about them. I had to know more, so I found and read the great authors: Richard Sanders Allen, Eric Sloane, and more.

Who built these wonderful structures? I've read their names as I read about their bridges, but who were they? I dug into my growing library and compiled a list of snapshots of some of the covered bridge builders.

**Burr, Theodore** (b. 1771, Torrington, CT; d. 1822, Middletown, PA)

Young Theodore Burr, whose father was a millwright, apprenticed in the building trades. In 1800, he left Connecticut for Oxford, New York, where he built a sawmill, a gristmill, and a stringer bridge to accommodate customers of the mills. He followed this with the building of a drawbridge in Catskill, a bridge over the Hudson River at Fort Miller, and a 330-foot arch bridge at Canajoharie over the Mohawk River.

In 1804, Burr built a nearly 800-foot *arch* bridge in four spans over the Hudson River, connecting Waterford and Lansingburgh. The arches, anchored at the facewalls of the piers, were carried by framing them with a series of multiple kingpost trusses, using crossed braces. He patented this design as the Burr Truss.

Burr moved to Middletown, Pennsylvania in 1812 and built five bridges over the Susquehanna River, all at the same time. The project proved too ambitious financially, and Burr died bankrupt in 1822.

Burr built no bridges in Vermont, but builders there added the Burr-style plank arch to the kingpost truss design attributed to builder/designer James F. Tasker.

**Fletcher, Bela J.** (b. 1811; d. 1877, Claremont, NH)

Bela Fletcher is best known in Vermont for his work in 1866 with James F. Tasker on the Cornish-Windsor Bridge, spanning the Connecticut River.

The two put up other bridges now long gone, using the timber lattice truss they used on the Cornish-Windsor Bridge: the Orford-Fairlee and Hanover-Lewiston bridges over the Connecticut and the span over the Pemigewasset River at West Campton, New Hampshire.

**Granger, Sanford** (b. 1796, Chesterfield, NH; d. 1882, Bellows Falls, VT)

Bridgewright Sanford Granger also operated a sawmill and a brickyard on Saxtons River in Westminster, Vermont. He was active in the Underground Railroad and favored temperance in the use of alcohol. His temperance position may not have been accepted happily by the craftsmen working for him, at a time when it was customary to pay them in part with a daily rum allowance.

Granger and his son Albert, with their crew, built bridges in Vermont and New Hampshire. Among them the Worrall, Hall (Milton Graton built the replica), and Bartonsville bridges in Rockingham. Most notably, he built the famed Tucker Toll Bridge in 1840, using what was left of Enoch Hale's bridge as falsework.

**Hale, Enoch** (b. 1733, Rowley, NH; d. 1813)

Shortly after the Revolution ended in 1783, Colonel Enoch Hale received a grant from the legislature to build a toll bridge. With the grant, he built the first bridge in America with a clear span longer than the length of one timber. The ideal place to site the bridge was where the river narrows between Rockingham and Walpole.

The outcropping of rock at midstream there was a bonus. Hale built a pier on it and crossed the stream in two spans, totaling 365 feet, supported by four sets of braces. Completed in 1785, the new bridge gave central Vermont access to the New England coast. The bridge served until 1840, when the wooden Tucker Toll Bridge replaced it. Today, the concrete and steel Vilas Bridge, built in 1931, stands at the site.

**Haupt, Herman** (b. 1817, Philadelphia, PA; d. 1905, Jersey City, NJ)

Herman Haupt graduated from West Point in 1835. He resigned his commission to become district superintendent and chief engineer for the Pennsylvania Railroad. In 1839, he designed and patented the Haupt Bridge Truss. When the Civil war began, he was drafted to serve as superintendent of military railroads. He rose to the rank of Major General.

**Howe, William** (b. 1803, Spenser, MA; d. 1852, Springfield, MA)

William Howe, after working in his father's sawmill as an apprentice, enrolled and graduated as an engineer at Leicester Academy in Leicester, Massachusetts.

After several years of building homes and churches, in 1840 he focused on building bridges. While experimenting with bridge designs, he invented the first truss to undergo a complete mathematical stress analysis. The Howe truss design uses timber chords and braces with iron rod tension members. Patented in 1840

and improved in 1850, the truss became the most used railroad bridge truss of its time.

Rather than building the bridges himself, he sold the rights to use his design to bridge builders across the country. In 1841, when railroad builders found his design adaptable to their need to accommodate heavy railroad traffic, a firm owned by Amasa Stone, specializing in the construction of railway bridges, bought a license for the use of the Howe patent and built hundreds of railroad bridges all over New England, and then all over the state of Ohio.

**Long, Stephen H.** (b. 1784, Hopkinton, NH; d. 1864, Alton, IL)

An explorer, a railroad engineer, and an officer in the U.S. Army Engineers, Stephen Long attained the rank of Brevet-Colonel. In 1817 and 1823, he led expeditions exploring the upper Mississippi River, the Rocky Mountains, Minnesota, and the northern national border. Long's Peak, near Denver Colorado, is named for him.

In 1830, Long patented the Long Truss, the first wooden truss in America into which some mathematical calculations were used. It was a parallel chord truss, resembling a series of boxed X's, a forerunner of the panel type trusses used in iron bridges.

He experimented with wooden bridge trusses for some 30 years, writing leaflets and a booklet which gave directions to bridge builders and suggestions to the best procedures for erecting his truss.

**Paddleford, Peter** (b. 1785, Enfield, NH; d. 1859, Littleton, NH)

Peter Paddleford, bridge builder and truss designer, while born in Enfield, is usually known as a resident of Littleton. There he established his business as a millwright and bridge builder and became very well known.

He was a builder of railroad bridges, mainly using the Long truss. He eventually designed his own truss, modifying Long's truss by installing counterbraces that crossed into three panels. Accused of stealing the design from Stephen Long, he never recorded his patent, but Paddleford's truss became widely used in New Hampshire and Maine. It was especially popular in northeast Vermont.

His first self-designed bridge was possibly Joel's Bridge in Conway, New Hampshire, built in 1846, working in partnership with his son, Philip. Peter Paddleford retired in 1849, while Philip continued to build bridges.

**Palmer, Timothy** (b. 1751, Rowley, MA; d. 1821, Newburyport, MA)

Timothy Palmer is believed to be the first American bridge builder to advocate roofing bridges against the weather, estimating that the life of the structure would be extended by as much as forty years. A self-taught civil engineer, he built bridges in New England and Pennsylvania, including the *Permanent Bridge* across the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia. Using arch trusses, it had an overall length of 495 feet in three spans: 150 feet, 195 feet, and 150 feet. Built in 1804-1806, it burned in 1875.

In 1792, he built the arched 273-foot Essex-Merrimack Bridge in two spans. Just two years later, he completed a 244-foot arched span across the Piscataqua River, served by a trestle on piles, the combination covering a distance of over one-half mile. The bridge succumbed to ice in 1855.

**Powers, Nichols M.** (b. 1817, Pittsford, VT; d. 1897, Clarendon, VT)

Raised on a farm near Pittsford, Nichols Powers apprenticed under bridge builder Abraham Owen. He built his first bridge before he was 21 years old and continued to build bridges in his home area until the 1850s, when he helped build the Connecticut River Bridge at Bellows Falls.

In 1854, he built a 228-foot single-span two-lane bridge at Blenheim, New York, using a design similar to Long's truss. In 1866, he built a railroad bridge over the Susquehanna River at Perryville, Maryland. He returned to Vermont to work as a division engineer for the Bennington & Rutland Railroad. He continued to build bridges in Vermont, returning to the plank-lattice truss with which he began his career. He built his last bridge in Shrewsbury, the Brown Bridge, over the Cold River in 1880.

**Pratt, Thomas Willis** (b. 1812, Boston, MA; d. 1875, Boston, MA)

Willis Pratt, son of Boston architect Caleb Pratt, was educated as an engineer. In 1844, he and his father patented the Pratt Truss. Featuring a combination of timber posts and crossed iron diagonals, the truss was found to be difficult and expensive to construct in wood, but it later became the basis for the design of all-iron truss work. Willis Pratt also adapted Ithiel Town's plank-lattice truss for railroad use, naming it the Town-Pratt Truss, doubling the web and using a heavier plank.

A child prodigy, at 15 he was offered a teaching position in Troy, New York, at a technical school which became the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. In the 1830s, barely of legal age, he served as aide, division



engineer, and then superintendent of the Norwich & Worcester Railroad in Connecticut.

Though he never received proper recognition, his monuments are the hundreds of steel Pratt-type railway and highway bridges across the country.

**Tasker, James F.** (b. 1826, Cornish, NH; d. 1903, Claremont, NH)

James Tasker, best known for his work in 1866 on the Cornish-Windsor Bridge, spanning the Connecticut River, was a prolific bridge builder in east central Vermont. In his construction, he used either a plank-lattice truss or a multiple-kingpost truss of his own design.

Tasker became known at county fairs and other gatherings, where he assembled his model bridge with 2" x 2" lumber, then drove his 1600-pound horse over it – a convincing sales pitch that won him contracts in the towns of east central Vermont.

When the crops were in in the fall of the year, Tasker would set out to build the bridges he had contracted for, using lumber cut from his farm and milled in Claremont. The mechanical genius of this self-taught engineer became evident when he signed his contracts. Unable to read or write, he could only sign by tracing his name on the paper.

**Town, Ithiel** (b. 1784, Thompson, CT; d. 1844, New Haven, CT)

Ithiel Town was an architect of public buildings and churches in New Haven, Connecticut. He designed a plank-lattice bridge truss and patented it in 1820 as the Town Truss and again in 1835. While he was not known as a bridge builder, he sold the use of his design to builders of bridges through agents for a fee of one dollar per foot.

The design was successful because ordinary carpenters using plank rather than huge timbers could assemble it. It was said that "The Town truss could be built by the mile and cut off by the yard."

## Fairfax Bridge Mystery is Solved

- By Cindy Drew

Fairfax – Spanning Mill Brook, the Fairfax Covered Bridge has been a part of this community for years. Until recently, the exact number of years was anybody's guess.

The mystery caused considerable speculation among members of the town's historical society. Close examination of the structure did not yield a clue as to what year it was constructed.

Mrs. Marian Chaffee, the town clerk, always suspected that a date existed, but she was never able to turn up any evidence. "I felt that it had to be there," she said. "They kept such careful records back then, and we have records going back 200 years."

One day, while title searching an old deed, she came across the following entry in the town records regarding the Pecor house, formerly located on Maple Street. "...bounded as follows, to wit: commencing at the highway leading from Fairfax Hollow to the new covered bridge, bounded on the south by the M.E. parsonage land, on the east by Charles Cady and H. E. Humbbell's land, on the north by the hotel lot now owned and occupied by George H. Hill, on the west by the above-mentioned highway being the same land and premises..." The record clearly stated that the house was bounded by "the new covered bridge." It was the first concrete reference to the structure ever found in early records. The deed was dated March 20, 1868. "That gave me an idea of where to search," said Mrs. Chaffee.

Equally fortunate was the renovation of the inside of the town clerk's vault. When new shelves were installed, a wealth of old records were found. Dusty and seldom seen records contained the missing link.

Helping Mrs. Chaffee in her search was a set of old maps. "The bridge was on a map from 1871, but not on a map of 1857," she said.

Finally, plainly written in the Selectman's Day Book of 1865, the following entries were found:

- July 29, 1865: to Henry Stearns for filling at the end of the bridge (1865), \$5
- July 17, 1865: to F. Cherrier for work on the bridge (1864), \$5.28
- August 31, 1865: to Kingsbury and Storey for building and repairing near H. Stearns, \$1,012

These records were the key to dating the bridge. After discovering the records, Mrs. Chaffee wrote down the information and contacted the local historical society, of which she is a member. Soon after, a plaque was placed on the bridge, showing its construction date.

As a result of additional research, Mrs. Chaffee was able to determine through the use of *Childs Franklin and Grand Isle Directory*, 1882-1883, that the bridge was built by local contractors. Contained in the directory is an entry for Lucas Kingsbury, noting that he was a "carpenter and builder" from North Fairfax. Interestingly, Fairfax was once a thriving business community with a population much larger than its

present numbers. Doctors, lawyers, horseshoe smiths, contractors, and several others dotted the town. Today, few such businesses exist.

Past records show that the street leading to and from the bridge was known by several names, including Water Street, Spring Street, and the present Maple Street. Before construction of the bridge, the area was a dead end.

During the 1927 flood, the bridge was moved off its foundation. Clifford Stewart, a longtime resident of the village, was present when the waters swept the bridge up and moved it downstream. "It was twisted off its foundation and had to be put back," he recalled. A second bridge, located where the large steel bridge is today, was not so lucky. That bridge was totally washed away.

The existing covered bridge has a uniqueness about it. Unlike some bridges, its builders failed in one slight regard. The result, described in one historical book, makes the bridge "lean rather drunkenly." Today, the bridge's tendency to lean has been slightly offset by the local Jaycees, who as part of their Bicentennial projects, repaired [the] structure. Strengthened by the renovations, the bridge stands firmly across the brook, giving passage to cars and shelter to strollers.

Was she surprised to find the date after it having been lost for so many years? Mrs. Chaffee pauses, smiles, and says, "No. I always knew it was there. It was just a matter of finding it."

*From the St. Albans Messenger, 10/24/1976.*

*Our thanks to Rae Laitres for sharing.*

## Recollections about East Georgia Bridge

The loss of the East Georgia Bridge calls forth reminiscences, which may be of some interest to the people of that vicinity.

In March 1876, the former bridge was taken out by the ice a few hours after the adjournment of town meeting. At that meeting, my uncle, Addison E. Colton, was elected first selectman. Consequently, he conducted the negotiations for a new bridge. There was much discussion as to whether it should be built of iron or wood, and several town meetings were held. It was voted by a majority of one to build it of wood. The contract was awarded to Hawkins & Burrill of Springfield, Mass., to erect a bridge of Michigan pine for \$3,900. The town had to pay the freight on five carloads of lumber from Michigan. The span was found to be 172 feet and

seven inches. It was placed four feet higher than the old one. I heard the architect say that with the side spread of the overflow, the water would never reach it. The following year, the Iron Bridge at Milton was erected, and my uncle made the prediction that his bridge would last longer. The two went out the same day in a recent flood.

Now, it is a fair question whether it is necessary to replace this bridge, under present conditions. An agent who looked over the ground in 1876 observed that the bridge was to be used by other towns more than by the town of Georgia. In recent years, most of the through traffic from towns up the river to Milton and the islands has gone by another route. There has been no guide board to direct travelers through this bridge, and most of the motorists have preferred to go up the hill to the state road, which is only a mile and a half further. The grass has been growing in the road at the entrance to the bridge. If the half dozen families in Georgia who live on the south side of the river would prefer to be annexed to Milton, they would be nearer their voting place, about as near to school, and would live in a town which maintains a high school.

However, there is doubtless another side to the matter, and the whole situation should be thoroughly canvassed.

[From *The Vermont Sunday News*, 11/26/1927, contributed by Rae Laitres. See [www.lostbridges.org](http://www.lostbridges.org), East Georgia Bridge 45-06-24x]

## Our Lending Library: A Reading-for-Pleasure and Research Source

If you are looking for a good read or for answers to questions about covered bridges, The Vermont Covered Bridge Society has assembled a lending library available to all society members in good standing. Librarian Warren Tripp has a book list, complete with descriptions and critiques of each book. Copies of the list are available by mail, email, or you may go to <http://www.vermontbridges.org> and select "Lending Library."

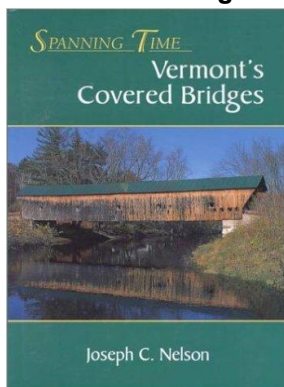
Contact Warren Tripp, P.O. Box 185, South Barre, VT 05670, [fftwtb@yahoo.com](mailto:fftwtb@yahoo.com), or 802-476-8637, and give him the title of the book(s) you wish to borrow. He will respond with the mailing cost and send the order to you when he receives that fee.

The books are sent by the Postal Service's Media Mail and returned to the library the same way.

# For Sale

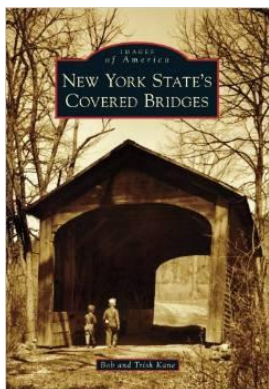
## Spanning Time: Vermont's Covered Bridges by

Joseph C. Nelson features 102 color photographs of Vermont's covered bridges in fifteen chapters, each a guided tour. The tours are complete with maps, commentary on the uniqueness of each bridge, and historic highlights about the towns and villages in which the bridges stand.



An appendix provides: A Summary of Vermont's Covered Bridges; A Covered Bridge Glossary; A Bridge Truss section, explaining how trusses work; Thumbnail biographies of people who designed and built the bridges; A Covered Bridge Reading List, for bridge and history buffs; A detailed Index. *Spanning Time: Vermont's Covered Bridges*: 7" x 10", 288 pages. Published by New England Press at P.O. Box 575, Shelburne, VT 05482. *Spanning Time* is available directly from the author for \$25.00, free shipping. For reviews of the book, go to [www.vermontbridges.com/bookreviews.htm](http://www.vermontbridges.com/bookreviews.htm). Send your check or money order to: VCBS, P.O. Box 267, Jericho, VT 05489.

## New York State's Covered Bridges - When one



typically thinks of covered bridges, New York is not the first state to come to mind, but New York once had over 300 covered bridges. Floods, fires and progress have claimed all but 32. Readers will enjoy seeing NY's current bridges, including the oldest existing covered bridge in the U.S., the Hyde Hall Covered Bridge, located in Glimmerglass State Park, and the world's longest

single-span covered bridge in the world, the Blenheim Covered Bridge, washed away by Tropical Storm Irene in 2011. This book also highlights the Theodore Burr Covered Bridge Resource Center in Oxford, NY, the first ever center of its kind specifically designed for covered bridge researchers. For a copy of the tour, contact Bob and Trish Kane, 167 Williams Rd., Sherburne, NY 13460, 607-674-9656, [bob-trish68@frontiernet.net](mailto:bob-trish68@frontiernet.net).

## Visions of Vermont art gallery, Jeffersonville, Vermont

at: <https://www.visionsofvermont.com/>

802.644.8183

**A special sale** for the benefit of the Vermont Covered Bridge Society featuring the works of Eric Tobin. All proceeds of the unframed prints go to the VCBS. Sale of the framed prints will be shared 50/50. They are all Giclée on acid free paper. The glass is non-glare artist's glass.

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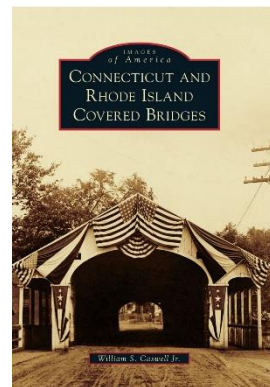
16x20 \$550 Matted and framed

20x24 \$850 Matted and framed

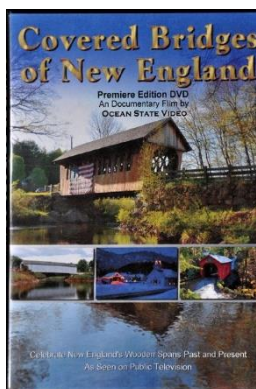


## Connecticut and Rhode Island Covered Bridges .

**Price reduced!** During their heyday in the mid- to late 1800s, more than 150 covered bridges dotted the landscape of Connecticut and Rhode Island. Since that time, floods, fires, and progress have claimed all but two of the historic structures. With over 200 images, this book provides insight into the covered bridge history of an area that has not been well documented in the past. To order your signed copy, send \$20.00 to Bill Caswell, 535 Second NH Turnpike, Hillsboro, NH 03244.



## Covered Bridges of New England —DVD Produced



by Ocean State Video of Rhode Island for Public Television. On Sale. Profits go to the Vermont Covered Bridge Society's Save-A-Bridge Program. For your copy, send \$20.00 plus \$2.75 shipping and \$1.20 Vermont sales tax to VCBS, c/o Joe Nelson, P.O. Box 267, Jericho, VT 05465-0267.



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